



Strategic Plan 2007-2011
**Office of the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing**

Department of Social and Health Services

Robin Arnold-Williams, Secretary

Public Affairs

Blake Chard, Deputy Secretary

Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Eric Raff, Director

Purpose of This Document

This strategic plan communicates how we will advance our mission and goals in a changing environment and meet our future challenges, so that we can better serve the most vulnerable populations in Washington State. This document is a road map that guides the business policies and improvement strategies for our organization, employees and partners.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the following colleagues who contributed to the development of this strategic plan:

ODHH Staff

Blake Chard; Deputy Secretary, Public Affairs

DSHS/ODHH Advisory Committee on Deafness

Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Stakeholders

For more information about this document please contact Eric Raff, Director at (360) 902-8000 (V) or 360-753-0699 (TTY) or by email at rafferic@dshs.wa.gov.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Chapter 1	Our Guiding Directions	1
	Mission	1
	Vision	1
	Guiding Principles	1
	Priorities of Government	1
	Statutory Authority	2
Chapter 2	The People We Serve	3
	Introduction	3
	Description of Services	3
Chapter 3	Appraisal of External Environment	7
	Potential Changes in Economy That Could Affect Clients' Needs	7
	Trends in Demographic and Customer Characteristics	9
	Activities That Link to Major Partners	11
	Stakeholder Input	15
	Future Challenges and Opportunities	18
Chapter 4	Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures	21
	A. Increase Employment and Self-Sufficiency	21
	B. Reinforce Strong Management to Increase Public Trust	23
	C. Strengthen Data-Driven Decision Making	24
	D. Value and Develop Employees	24
	E. Improve Internal and External Partnerships	25
Chapter 5	Performance Assessment	27
	Government Management Accountability and Performance	27
	Other Performance Reviews	27
	Closing Performance Gaps	28
Chapter 6	Internal Capacity Assessment	31
	Workforce and Organizational Capacity	31
	Technology Capacity	31
	Financial Capacity	33
	Service Delivery Capacity	34

Executive Summary

Dear Friends of ODHH,


The Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) Strategic Plan 2007-2011 is an evolving documentation of our strategy to remove barriers and close gaps in service delivery. The Strategic Plan outlines what ODHH is about, the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind people we serve to meet their needs, the environment we operate in, our goals, objectives, strategies and performance measures for the next five fiscal years and assessments of our performance and internal capacity to meet these goals.

The Strategic Plan is a portrayal of how we align our goals within the framework of ODHH legal mandates, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Goals and the State of Washington Priorities of Government (POG). It requires us to prioritize our goals and objectives and allocate our limited resources to complete them. Government Management Accountability Performance (GMAP) will define the performance measures by which ODHH will be judged on how we are doing. The GMAP process will hold us accountable to ensure that we are using the limited budget and resources wisely to produce positive results. The Strategic Plan is only a one piece to a puzzle, when put together, tells the story of how ODHH is doing.

This Strategic Plan has had greater stakeholder input and there are several new initiatives in the areas of mental health, deafblind, CapTel and telecommunications that have been incorporated. However, it does not attempt to propose solutions to every barrier faced by our communities. Some identified needs or issues will be included within the daily administration of our existing programs and services, while others are beyond the scope of our authority or resources.

It has been less than three years since I've joined ODHH and whereas I'm confident we are making good progress, I acknowledge systematic changes take time. Given the enormity of the tasks and challenges in the next five years, ODHH cannot do this without greater collaborative partnerships and public support. Please join me, the ODHH team and our partners to take ownership of this 2007-2011 Strategic Plan and fulfill the ODHH mission to make our vision a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Raff". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Eric Raff; Director

Chapter 1 • Our Guiding Directions

MISSION

The mission of ODHH is to remove barriers for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech disabled. We will provide resources allowing these people to have equal access and effective communication.

VISION

Our vision is an accessible Washington where people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech disabled enjoy self-sufficiency.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following are the guiding principles that reflect ODHH values and philosophy in how we operate and conduct our business. ODHH shall:

- have compassion for clients
- empower clients to achieve independence
- seek equal access opportunities
- appreciate diversity
- respect communication choices
- be open and accessible
- be accountable to the public
- encourage collaborative partnerships

PRIORITIES OF GOVERNMENT

The State of Washington Priorities of Government (POG) teams have identified eleven statewide priorities. DSHS have identified ten goals that are aligned with five of statewide priorities (POG). ODHH have identified seven goals that are closely aligned with five of DSHS goals.

Priorities of Government	DSHS Goals
Improve the economic vitality of business and individuals	Increase employment and self-sufficiency
Improve the ability of state government to achieve results efficiently and effectively	Reinforce strong management to increase public trust
	Strengthen data-driven decision making
	Value and develop employees
	Improve internal and external partnerships
DSHS Goals	ODHH Goals
Increase employment and self-sufficiency	Remove barriers to functionally-equivalent access to telecommunications
	Remove barriers to functionally-equivalent access

Reinforce strong management to increase public trust	to DSHS services
Strengthen data-driven decision making	Remove barriers to functionally-equivalent access to employment, government, businesses, non-profit organizations and the public.
Value and develop employees	Strengthen and improve service delivery
Improve internal and external partnerships	Improve Information Technology systems
	Improve workforce development and diversity
	Identify Gaps and Remove Barriers in Delivery Systems

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

United States of America (Federal)

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 – mandates reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in services offered by government and businesses and to provide equal employment opportunities, as well as establishing for the provision of telecommunications relay services.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 – mandates reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities to allow full access to and participation in public and private programs and services receiving federal funds.

Telecommunication Act of 1996, as amended, Section 225:- mandates establishment of relay services for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing; Section 255 requires that telecommunications service providers and manufacturers ensure that their telecommunications services and products are usable to the greatest extent possible by persons with disabilities.

Revised Code of Washington (Washington State)

RCW 43.20(A).720, et.seq. – authorizes the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to administer and fund for the provision of telecommunication services and distribution of specialized telecommunication equipment. If funding is available, exercise authority to provide reasonable accommodations on behalf of the Department.

RCW 43.19.190 - authorizes DSHS to purchase sign language interpreter services on behalf of people with hearing loss who are applicants and recipients of public assistance. The Office of the Secretary has delegated this authority to the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

RCW 49.60 – mandates the provision of reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities in places of employment, government and businesses.

Washington Administrative Code

WAC 388-43-001, et.seq – authority to provide social and human services through contracts with regional service centers serving the deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind.

Chapter 2 • The People We Serve

INTRODUCTION

There are people with hearing loss within the general population regardless of age, ethnicity, religion or income. There are approximately 530,000 individuals with a hearing loss in Washington, including 11,000 individuals who are deaf, 1,320 individuals who are deafblind, and other people with varying degrees of hearing loss who are legally blind. Washington State has a large deafblind population. Of the fifty states, only Louisiana has a larger deafblind population.

People with speech disabilities are defined as any person with an expressive communication impairment who has difficulty with or who is unable to communicate in one or more environments. ODHH addresses the telecommunication needs of people with speech disabilities.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

ODHH provides different services to the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind communities throughout Washington State. Services include providing telecommunication relay services, distribution of specialized telecommunication equipment, advocacy through case management, videophone communications via an infrastructure of videoconferencing sites, providing information & referral, hosting outreach & training activities, and providing sign language interpreters or other reasonable accommodations.

▪ **Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS)**

The Telecommunication Relay Service eliminates barriers to the telecommunication network, adhering to the goal of achieving functionally equivalent access to the telephone as a person with normal hearing and clear speech would. Telephone calls to persons with normal hearing are typically conducted through a communication assistant who makes the telephone conversation process easier. A contract with a telecommunication relay provider provides various relay features matching the consumer's degree of hearing loss or speech disability and preferred communication method.

▪ **Telecommunication Equipment Distribution (TED)**

Per regulations, eligible consumers apply to receive specialized telecommunication equipment and receive training to effectively use the equipment. Specialized telecommunication equipment distributed matches the consumers' degree of hearing loss or speech disability and preferred communication method. The equipment makes possible the consumer to access the telecommunication relay services or to make direct telephone calls with other parties having similar equipment.

▪ **Social and Human Services (SHS)**

Contracts with several Regional Service Centers on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

throughout the state allow for social and human services delivery. Historically, ODHH has been contracting with some of these centers since 1980s. Currently the scope of services includes: information and referral, education and training, outreach, and case management. Case management is about providing assistance or advocacy on the client's behalf to remove communication barriers to other organizations' programs and services.

- **Sign Language Interpreter Management (SLIM)**

A statewide contract is available for state agencies to purchase interpreter services on behalf of clients or customers with hearing loss. This program was recently created to administer the contract and improve the delivery of sign language interpreter services. Technical assistance and consultation is available to state agencies lacking the expertise to arrange interpreter services. The provision of sign language interpreters fulfills the reasonable accommodations mandate to ensure equal communication access to DSHS agencies, programs and services.

- **Communication Access Network (CAN)**

It is an ongoing telecommunication network of videoconferencing sites being established throughout Washington State within DSHS agencies, the regional service centers, and service providers. Each site includes a workstation utilizing the latest videoconferencing technologies. The functionality of these sites will be developed to include access to video relay services, video remote interpreting sign language, remote real-time captioning and face-to-face interpersonal communications. Technical assistance and training activities are provided to DSHS, state agencies, non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses and clients or customers.

- **Assistive Communication Technology (ACT)**

This new program was created to benefit people who are either hard of hearing or deafblind. One of its services will pave the way toward a service integration initiative: a DSHS-wide referral & loan system to provide auxiliary aids (e.g. assistive listening systems, captioning and other assistive technology). The provision of auxiliary aids will fulfill the reasonable accommodations mandate to ensure equal communication access to DSHS agencies and services.

- **Information and Referral, Advocacy (IRA)**

Deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind individuals, families, professionals and the general public may not know where to obtain specific information or who to contact about specialized programs and services related to hearing loss. These people make requests for information, resources and/or referrals that ODHH provides.

Advocacy services on behalf of individuals will continue to be the responsibility of the regional service centers. Advocacy typically focuses on communication access to products, services and employment in the private, public and nonprofit sectors. The role of the ODHH is to advocate for system change through revised regulations, policies and contracted services. ODHH may be requested to intervene for individuals needing access to a state government program or service.

- **Outreach and Training (OT)**

Outreach and training are designed toward different target audiences including professionals, organizations, and deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind communities. Outreach and training comprise activities such as diversity initiatives, exhibits at community events and conferences, publications and presentations. Outreach activities heighten the public profile and awareness of ODHH programs, deaf culture, and other issues pertaining to hearing loss. Training activities introduce sensitivity awareness with the knowledge and skills to DSHS staff, interested agencies and vendors to effectively serve the deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind individuals.

Chapter 3 • Appraisal of External Environment

POTENTIAL CHANGES IN ECONOMY THAT CAN AFFECT CLIENTS' NEEDS

Telecommunication Trends - The telecommunication industry is experiencing transformation at a rapid pace that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to monitor these national trends. ODHH is a small agency with in-house expertise that competes for oversight of other ODHH programs and services. ODHH exchange information with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC), Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Department of Revenue (DOR) to assist in the assessments of these trends and the implications.

Observations of the national trends pose momentous challenges. At this time, the United States Congress has been considering revamping the Telecommunications Act as amended in 1996. The Telecommunications Act will address the distinction between cable providers, telephone companies, Voice-Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) providers, and utility companies providing broadband or internet services over telephone, cable, fiber optics and electrical power lines. The distinction of services is between information services versus telecommunication services and whether information services should be subject to regulation and taxation. It is expected that the U.S. Congress will amend the Telecommunications Act in the near future.

The telephone subscribers' movement from landline telephones to wireless telephones (cellular) presents an impact on revenue as ODHH does not have excise tax collection authority for wireless telephones. In Washington State, for the first time during fiscal year 2006, the number of wireless subscribers has exceeded the number of landline subscribers.

Emerging technology such as Internet Protocol Telephony (IP-Telephony) utilized by corporations and government also presents a serious risk to the revenue stream. The infrastructure for landlines consists of Public Box Switches (PBX). With PBXs, a single line goes into a PBX and is split into many lines as extensions. The switchover from PBXs to IP-Telephony would have a drastic impact on the revenue stream. For instance, a building may have a PBX with 130 "landlines" on which excise taxes are collected. If the company owning the building switches from PBX to IP-Telephony, the number of "landlines" could potentially be reduced to 37.

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) - The FCC oversees Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Title IV mandates the requirement to provide telecommunication relay services on the states and telecommunication providers. The intent is to ensure that people with hearing loss and speech disabilities achieve functionally equivalent access to telecommunication services. The FCC often establishes administrative rules and announces rulings with new requirements that impact the states' capacity to comply and impose additional costs to implement. With anticipation of these rulings, ODHH and the Office of Financial Management have agreed to set aside \$900k in reserves for such possibilities.

National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) - All telecommunication providers are required to contribute using a "carrier contribution factor" of 0.00535 for the 2006-

2007 fund year. It is less than one percentage (>1%) of its' revenue deposited into an interstate Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) fund administered by NECA. This contribution fulfills the telecommunication providers' obligation to provide relay services as a mechanism to simplify the implementation complexity of the ADA Title IV mandate and regulations. The NECA fund reimburses the telecommunication relay provider and subsidizes 51% of interstate calls (Washington-to-another state) on a price-per-minute (PPM) basis. The state of Washington's ODHH subsidizes 49% of interstate calls and 100% of intrastate calls (calls within Washington). The NECA TRS fund itself may face a foreseeable depletion of reserves.

Emerging Telecommunication Relay Technologies - The FCC has ruled that the new Internet-protocol Relay (IP-Relay) and the Video Relay Service (VRS) features on the internet platform are eligible for 100% subsidization of both interstate and intrastate calls from the NECA interstate TRS fund. This is due to inability of current technology to identify the origin of calls made on the internet. There is no way to detect where a call is originating to determine whether it is an interstate or intrastate call. The PPM is significantly higher than telephone calls conducted across landline and wireless telephones using traditional telecommunication relay services. With the pressure of NECA fund depletion on the FCC and as utilization of internet technology to identify call origination becomes widespread, ODHH is expecting the FCC to make a ruling in the future to require the states to begin absorbing subsidization costs of 49% for interstate calls and 100% for intrastate calls using these emerging relay technologies.

Captioned Telephone (e.g. CapTel) is another emergent relay technology feature benefiting the hard of hearing or those who can speak clearly but have hearing loss. The functionality of CapTel is similar to the existing Voice Carry-Over (VCO) relay feature. VCO enables the hard of hearing person to speak for themselves however a text screen assist the understanding of the spoken word. The quality difference is that the relay communication assistant utilizes voice-recognition software to recreate verbatim telephone conversations in real-time as opposed to re-typing into a keyboard.

CapTel is an optional relay feature to be offered by the states and is currently not required by the FCC. CapTel is eligible for 51% subsidy of interstate calls (state-to-state) from the NECA interstate TRS fund. The states pay 49% for interstate calls and 100% for intrastate calls (within Washington State). Forty (40) states offer CapTel on a limited basis, controlling costs by distributing a limited number of CapTel telephone equipment that must be purchased to utilize the CapTel relay service. An unlimited distribution of CapTel telephone equipment would create a scenario of spiraling costs and eventual fund depletion. The FCC had accepted public comments on a petition to make CapTel availability mandatory upon the states. At this time, the FCC has yet to issue a declaratory ruling which could be anytime in the near future.

An overview of how the states and NECA currently fund the provision of relay services for the period July 1, 2005, through June 30, 2006 on a price-per-minute (PPM) basis follows:*

	Telecommunication Relay Service / CapTel		Internet Protocol Relay		Video Relay Service		Speech-to-Speech	
	NECA	ODHH	NECA	ODHH	NECA	ODHH	NECA	ODHH
Interstate	51%	49%	100%	0%	100%	0%	51%	49%
Interstate	\$1.291	**	\$1.293	\$0	\$6.644	\$0	\$1.409	**
Intrastate	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Intrastate	\$0	**	\$1.278	\$0	\$6.644	\$0	\$0	**

* As of 7/3/06 ** Proprietary Information

Service Delivery System Trends – Several states’ public utility commissions are facing challenges with agencies and groups serving the blind. These agencies and groups desire to draw upon surcharges (relay funds) for non-relay services; particularly purchase of informational services over the telephone. The service entails the blind calling a telephone number to obtain a voice reading of daily newspaper articles. To-date, most of these legislative bills have not passed in these states. The prevailing view is that relay funds were intended to benefit those with hearing loss, whereas there are other funding sources for people with other disabilities.

An emergent trend is passage of legislation regarding programs and services benefiting people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Such legislation is utilizing the use of relay funds to fund such non-relay programs. In Utah and Missouri, relay funds are used to towards the interpreter training program and recruitment of sign language interpreters. In Oregon and Colorado, relay funds were used to fund and sustain the newly created state agencies on deaf and hard of hearing. Oregon had passed 2005 legislation splitting the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services from the Oregon Disabilities Commission due to the Commission lack of specialized expertise and inability to address unmet needs. New Mexico passed 2004 legislation, allowing use of relay funds to subsidize non-relay programs. Similar 1999 legislation passed in Arizona.

Video Relay Service has become a popular feature among the deaf communities who uses sign language. The explosive growth in Video Relay Service (VRS) has led to rapid establishment of numerous video relay call centers throughout the country. In western Washington there are three (3) video relay call centers. The call centers are staffed with sign language interpreters. The Video Relay Service providers has been aggressively recruiting freelance sign language interpreters from the community, enticing them with attractive salaries and benefits, relocation packages, and/or travel accommodations. Unfortunately, the country already has an existing shortage of qualified interpreters who freelance. The migration of interpreters from community interpreting toward video relay interpreting has heightened the shortage of interpreters available for community interpreting. As a result, many requests for interpreter services cannot be accommodated. It has become a national problem whereas there are now two national task forces comprising of cooperative organizations addressing different aspects of this dilemma.

TRENDS IN DEMOGRAPHIC AND CUSTOMER CHARACTERISTICS

The customer base served by ODHH varies on a program level. For instance, the Telephone Relay Service and Telecommunication Equipment Distribution program serves individuals with speech disabilities who do not have hearing loss. The social and human services provided through the regional service centers’ caseloads comprise 65% of the individuals served who live at or below the federal poverty levels.

Deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech disabled individuals face communication barriers in every aspect of daily life. Obstacles and barriers continue within the private, public and nonprofit sectors. Barriers to obtain medical, education, mental health, substance abuse, employment, legal, financial and other services in society persist and downgrade the quality of life. Individuals living in rural areas face greater accessibility barriers to service delivery systems due to lack of prerequisite expertise and resources. Individuals of ethnic background including African-American, Native Americans and Asian-Americans have been grossly underserved as they may not be aware of the resources available to them.

Within the deaf communities, the significant need continues to be employment opportunities through more effective job placement and employment-related services. Advocacy among the deaf community is underutilized; due to a lack of empowerment. Effective awareness, education and training are sorely needed. Independent living care with one-on-one training has been an identified need. Aging deaf citizens are voicing the need for specialized housing to obtain assisted living, partial care and nursing services. Retention, certification and training in the sign language interpreting profession need to be addressed. Other areas of concern involve the scarcity of qualified and certified legal interpreters for the judicial process/courts and lack of youth leadership training opportunities.

It is crucial to note a subset population within the deaf communities, individuals who are both deaf and developmental disabled. The Division of Developmental Disabilities funds housing and supported living programs to serve this unique subset population. There is a concern that some deaf & developmental disabled individuals have yet to be identified within institutions or communities who may be eligible for appropriate services.

Within the hard of hearing communities, the main grievance is the unavailability of the CapTel (Captioned Telephone) service, a telecommunication relay feature. CapTel is considered an “enhanced” voice carry-over (VCO) relay feature currently offered. However, the argument is that CapTel provides the “functionally-equivalent” access to telecommunications that VCO does not provide. There is a lack of readily-available auxiliary aids to obtain communication access to government programs and services. Typically, a state agency would provide a sign language interpreter without the realization that captioning and/or assistive listening device systems are the more appropriate auxiliary aid to accommodate their degree of hearing loss and preferred communication method. Last, but not least, one identified issue has been the need for legislation requiring insurance and health care plans to define hearing aids as a prosthesis and thus be eligible for coverage.

Within the deafblind communities, additional funding for support service provider (SSP) has been identified as a top priority. Other pressing concerns are lack of employment opportunities with deafblind having a higher unemployment rate, and lack of appropriate technological equipment and training opportunities for functionally equivalent access to telecommunications and the internet. Additionally, the need for a larger pool of qualified and certified interpreters for the deafblind has been a recurring issue. Historically, the deafblind community has been underserved due to a lack of a clearly designated agency responsible for meeting its needs. Sometimes members of this community slip through the array of services offered by ODHH, the Department of Services for the Blind and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Last but not least, the parents of deaf infants, toddlers and children should be recognized as a core customer group. Washington State is one of two remaining states

in the United States that does not have a mandatory newborn hearing and screening infrastructure. Newborn hearing and screening provided by hospitals has been largely voluntary and is concentrated along the I-5 corridor in western Washington. Early intervention services for deaf and hard of hearing infants & toddlers, age birth to 3 is barely nonexistent and fragmented for age 3-6. There are inadequate resources for parent support groups, training to assert educational rights, and opportunities for deaf children of hearing parents and hearing children with deaf parents to interact. Deaf children have little exposure to deaf role models with lack of mentorship opportunities.

Overall, the trends in customer characteristics indicate an increasing number of aging baby boomers with progressive hearing loss. This indicates an increase in the overall total of hard of hearing and late-deafened people. Progressive hearing loss will require greater prevention awareness and coping strategies. Many late-deafened adults and deaf children are obtaining cochlear implants, a surgical procedure to create digital hearing. Deaf children with cochlear implants are particularly prevalent in Spokane. Cochlear implantation has been controversial within the deaf community as it is viewed as a clash between cultural versus medical perspectives. As these children reach adulthood, the impact on demands for ODHH programs and services remains to be seen. Another trend of concern is the increasing number of deaf K-12 students in a mainstream environment who have an inadequate and fragmented system of support services and insufficient numbers of qualified teachers of the deaf and educational interpreters. These future generations of new customers are likely to have needs and issues different from the customers presently served by ODHH.

ACTIVITIES LINK TO MAJOR PARTNERS

▪ **National Organizations and Associations**

As a member of national organizations and associations, ODHH can scan the external environment regarding trends in the telecommunication and human services delivery systems within the government, nonprofit and business sectors. Such memberships allow greater exchange of information regarding state-by-state comparison of statutes, regulations, policies and other relevant programmatic areas via electronic distribution lists and conferences.

ODHH is a member of national associations including the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Hearing Loss Association of America (HLA) - formerly Self Help for the Hard of Hearing (SHHH), American Association of the Deaf Blind (AADB), Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), Telecommunications for the Deaf (TDI), National Association of State Relay Administrators (NASRA), Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program Administrators (TEDPA), and State Telecommunication Administrators of Relay by Sprint (STARS) among others.

The Director of ODHH is embarking on a new leadership role, working with colleagues from a few other states to establish a national association of state government agencies on the deaf and hard of hearing. The immediate goal is to incorporate as a non-profit. Ironically, in the late 1970s a defunct association inclusive of nonprofit organizations was based in Spokane, WA.

▪ **State of Washington Government Agencies**

ODHH is currently partnering or will be pursuing partnership opportunities with several departments and agencies in the following endeavors:

Department of Licensing (DOL) – ODHH need to pursue a partnership opportunity with the Department of Licensing to install ODHH-developed video clips with instructions in American Sign Language on the driver license manual, application and written test for deaf individuals with limited English proficiency. In addition, there was 2006 legislation regarding the provision of sign language interpreters during the driving test. ODHH will provide technical consultation on use of the sign language interpreter services contract.

Department of Health (DOH) – ODHH will continue to collaborate with the Genetics Services Section, Early Hearing loss Detection, Diagnosis and Intervention (EDHHI). EDHHI administers the voluntary reporting by hospitals of newborn hearing and screening testing results. ODHH need to pursue a partnership opportunity with the DOH; Maternal and Child Health Division to conduct a pilot project on the dissemination of hearing loss prevention and hearing milestones targeted at parents of adolescents and youth through a DOH program called Child Profile.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) / Washington Sensory Disabilities Services (WSDS) – ODHH is exploring partnership opportunities with the WSDS. WSDS provides technical assistance to school districts but cannot provide direct services. Currently, two of ODHH staff is on the WSDS advisory committee on serving deafblind students. There have been legislative activities regarding standards for educational interpreters on which ODHH can offer technical assistance.

Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) – ODHH is a permanent associate member on the GCDE board. ODHH will work with GCDE which has indicated a willingness to explore funding for the installation of videoconferencing workstations at Work Source facilities to promote greater access for employment-related services.

Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) – ODHH is partnering with both WSD and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to train staff on becoming 'raters' in the assessment of state employees' sign language proficiency to evaluate their eligibility for assignment pay/dual language pay. ODHH and WSD are exploring ways to provide videoconferencing equipment to parents of deaf children for two purposes: 1) for parents to participate in Individualized Education Planning process of children enrolled at WSD thus minimizing the necessity for parents throughout the state to travel long-distance to Vancouver, WA where WSD is housed. 2) for parents to participate in the "Shared Video Reading Online Program" (SVROP) and read books to their deaf children in their homes which helps the children improve their English literacy using American Sign Language.

Department of General Administration (GA) – ODHH is the DSHS lead agency to administer the sign language interpreter services contract on behalf of the State of Washington. The contract is available to state agencies by participating in the GA-administered Washington State Purchasing Cooperative (WSPC). ODHH is also a representative on the GA State Facilities Architectural Access Committee (SFAAC). The committee meets monthly to review architectural plans for remodeling state offices and ensuring that new construction for lease by state agencies meets all federal and state accessibility standards. Membership of the SFAAC comprises of several state agencies and various disability groups. ODHH represents accessibility issues for persons with hearing loss.

Military Department / Office of Emergency Management (OEM) - ODHH used to contract with the E-911 Emergency Access Program, currently operated under the auspices of the Hearing and Speech Deafness Center. This program provides training to Public Service Answering Point (PSAP) professionals on how to receive and handle calls from TTY users. OEM administers 911 call centers and now funds the E-911 Emergency Access Program. ODHH is collaborating with OEM on ensuring that the WA State Homeland emergency management plan addresses access to disaster-related activities (e.g. emergency notification, evacuation, etc.) prompted by terrorism, environmental or natural disaster events.

Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) - ODHH will pursue a partnership opportunity with both DSB and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to reestablish the defunct DeafBlind Task Force addressing deafblind issues.

Other Departments – Last but not least in importance, ODHH has an ongoing working relationship with the following departments and agencies:

- Office of the Administrators for the Courts (OAC)
- Office of Financial Management (OFM)
- Department of Revenue (DOR)
- Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC)
- Department of Information Services (DIS) / Information Services Board (ISB)

▪ **Department of Social and Health Services**

ODHH is endeavoring to work with all DSHS administrations, divisions and programs to ensure administrative policies applicable to hearing loss issues are updated and in compliance. ODHH offers free technical assistance, TTY usage training and deaf awareness presentations to any DSHS agency that requests it.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) - ODHH is partnering with both WSD and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to train staff on becoming evaluators in the assessment of state employees' sign language proficiency to evaluate their eligibility for assignment pay/dual language pay. ODHH is currently offering operational and technical assistance to eleven established DVR videoconferencing workstations throughout local DVR offices. ODHH will be exploring partnership opportunities with both DVR and Department of Services for the Blind to reestablish the defunct DeafBlind Task Force addressing deafblind issues.

Aging and Disability Services Administration (ADSA) – Within ADSA Division of Developmental Disabilities is the Infant-Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP). ODHH was a member of the ITEIP Early Intervention for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children advisory council which developed early intervention standards and a brochure for parents. ODHH will continue to work with ITEIP to ensure the needs of deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers are addressed.

Other DSHS Administrations/Divisions – Last but not least in importance, ODHH has an ongoing relationship with the following DSHS administrations and divisions:

- Economic Services Administration
 - Division of Community Services
- Health and Recovery Services Administration

- Medical Assistance
- Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse
- Division of Mental Health
- Public Affairs
 - Special Commitment Center
 - Diversity of Access and Equal Opportunity
 - Office of Strategic Communications
 - Community and Legislative Affairs
- Management Services Administration
 - Central Contracts Services
 - Human Resources Division
 - Office of Research and Data Analysis

▪ **State-Wide Organizations and Associations**

ODHH is a member of several statewide organizations and associations including the Washington State Association of the Deaf (WSAD), Hearing Loss Association of Washington (HLA-WA), Washington State Deaf Blind Citizens (WSDBC), and Washington State Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (WSRID). As an active member of these statewide organizations and attending their conferences and meetings, ODHH maintains a pulse on public opinion and customer expectations of ODHH. ODHH has begun to sponsor these organizations' biennium conferences to enhance visibility.

▪ **ODHH/Regional Service Centers**

ODHH meets quarterly with the executive directors of the regional service centers on the deaf and hard of hearing. The agenda typically revolves around ODHH-Center contractual relationship on issues that impact all of the Centers, particularly programmatic issues and gaps of services, and areas of coordination and efficiency. ODHH attends the centers' annual board of directors meetings to maintain a pulse on the capacity of the board's oversight role and to maintain a pulse on public opinion and stakeholder expectations of the centers. The regional service centers and their facilities are located as follows:

Hearing and Speech Deafness Center	Seattle-Bellingham
Tacoma Area Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities	Tacoma
Eastern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Spokane
Southeastern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Vancouver
Southwestern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Pasco-Yakima

▪ **Regional and Local Organizations, Associations and Service Providers**

The Hearing, Speech and Deafness Center (HSDC) approached ODHH to take over its 'Service Provider Coalition', a group of organizations who serve the same or similar populations: deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind in King County and surrounding regions. The goals of the Service Provider Coalition (SPC) focus group are to avoid duplication of services, identify and address gaps in services, share mutual support and best practices and develop a cohesive "public voice" to the communities about the needs. ODHH intends to expand statewide and include other service providers. Recently, the SPC identified mental health services as the top priority to focus on for the next several years.

ODHH maintains a presence at several regional and local grassroots organizational events such as meetings, socials, workshops held by the regional and local organizations. This presence enables ODHH to monitor trends in customer characteristics.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

ODHH Advisory Committee on Deafness

The ODHH advisory committee on deafness met twice to review the 2006-2011 strategic plan current at the time on June 4, 2005 and September 24, 2005. All of the goals, objectives and strategies were reviewed and comments were provided.

The following results from the June 4th meeting are: an emphasis that ODHH should take a proactive role, rather than supportive role to develop "public awareness" of laws. Awareness should include understanding that deaf/blind people require specific interpreters and notification to homeland security that cochlear implants set off metal detectors at airports.

It was also recommended that ODHH utilize disaster notification technology for the deaf and hard of hearing to access homeland security responses and that the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution program income requirements be substituted with a flat fee.

The following results from the September 24th meeting are: suggestions on choice of words, grammar, and using simpler language, identifying underrepresented / underserved groups (especially in rural areas.) and establish "hearing loss prevention" activities, and identify rural farmers who have difficulty acknowledging their hearing loss. Another suggestion was that ODHH seek alternative funds for the development of regional service centers and a proposal that ODHH run the centers, rather than contracting it out.

ODHH Staff - ODHH had a two-day staff retreat on September 29-30, 2005 to discuss in depth the strategic plan. During the staff retreat, brainstorming sessions was held addressing the following elements:

- Statutory Authority & Fiscal Background
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)
- Vision, Mission Statement, and Guiding Principles

A summary of SWOT analysis resulting from brainstorming sessions are as follows:

Strengths: knowledge and experience, common values and beliefs, commitment, fiscal responsibility and stability, teamwork, vision and leadership, and integrity.

Weaknesses: not enough staff, risk avoidance, lack of programmatic data, need for streamlined delegation of priorities and projects.

Opportunities: Enhancing visibility, emergency preparedness due to Hurricane Katrina, telecommunications trends on the internet, levying surcharges on wireless subscribers, attending more conferences, revising DSHS administrative policy on reasonable accommodations, partnership opportunities, legislation to clarify mandate (RCW)

Threats: less funds for nonprofits due to Hurricane Katrina, declining landlines/revenue, VRS costs to be imposed on states, CapTel cost burden, competing demands on ODHH, shrinking pool of interpreters, RCW limitations to address unmet needs.

Per staff suggestions and agreement during the retreat, there is now more emphasis on strategic planning during the monthly staff meetings. October 2005 – March 2006 staff meetings focused on identifying stakeholders, determining stakeholder criteria to evaluate ODHH performance and a self-assessment on how ODHH is doing with stakeholders.

Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind Stakeholders - ODHH hosted two (2) three-hour town hall meetings. For this strategic plan, a new approach was taken during the town hall meetings. The meetings opened with a brief agency overview and then each of the ODHH program managers led focus groups for in depth discussions on issues related to:

- Telecommunications
- Sign Language Interpreting
- Social and Human Services
- Hard of Hearing Issues

These focus groups assessed issues and priorities, raising concerns and providing opportunities for feedback. The town hall meetings were held on the following locations and dates:

A	<u>Location</u>	<u>Facility</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Attendees</u>
	Tacoma	Tacoma Community College	March 17, 2006	16
	Spokane	Eastern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	April 1, 2006	60

summary of issues and comments resulting from the focus groups' brainstorming sessions are as follows:

Tacoma Town Hall

Telecommunications – preserve client services without budget cutbacks and include CapTel telephone equipment in the distribution program.

Sign Language Interpreting – Interpreters hourly rates and 'agency fee' need to be restructured, DSHS need more training about interpreting & communication, stakeholders need to be included when writing the new contract, compare current contract/program with other states to attract more interpreters, develop a grievance policy, determine how to deal with unqualified interpreters.

Social and Human Services - Centers need to schedule remote visits on regular basis or by appointments or ODHH to contract with regional-statewide 'floaters'. Other issues include videoconferencing services, social and 'community-building' opportunities, reaching out to "non-traditional" Deaf Community, involvement with educational issues for families, provide early intervention resources, seek positive self-esteem opportunities for next generation of children, create a centralized distribution mechanism for public announcements of community events, use the media and have regular town hall meetings.

Hard of Hearing Issues – Computer Assisted Real-Time Transliteration (CART) issues include posting a list of captioners on the website, funding CART and assistive listening systems (ALS) for WA-HLA chapter meetings, identifying captioners willing to provide pro bono services and providing CapTel relay services sooner rather than later. The regional service centers model is not working for the hard of hearing with the exception of HSDC, need to hire hard of hearing specialists in the Centers and a hard of hearing

person in ODHH. Website need to be updated. Participants acknowledged ODHH leadership is more inclusive of the hard of hearing & speech disabled.

Spokane Town Hall

Telecommunications – It was shared that ODHH is considering revamping the TED program. Possible distribution methods discussed was: vouchers, 'drop ship', and current contracted trainers. The Drop Ship method was deemed as a viable option however some clients will need one-on-one training and others may feel overwhelmed with the specialized equipment and not use it. As a result, suggested training options in conjunction with a 'drop ship' distribution. Questions of when CapTel relay services would be available.

Sign Language Interpreting – Need to verify certification, to address the shortage of interpreters with mentorship & training opportunities, promoting the interpreting profession, simplify contract reporting requirements, making sure interpreters are qualified, address the need to improve existing Interpreter Training Programs and foster community colleges and 4-year colleges partnerships.

Social and Human Services – Need to address employment issues: employers' awareness, reasonable accommodations and filing complaints. Need additional case managers/social workers and training for independent living skills. Need more educational workshops and a law class. Outreach need to include youth mentorship and leadership programs with more funding. Need more interpreters and usage of video remote interpreters for rural areas and job interviews. Specialized fire alarms for homes should be included in equipment distribution. Senior citizen issues, peer support, lack of sports/recreational opportunities, and assistance for non-certified interpreters to obtain certification were raised.

Hard of Hearing Issues - ODHH needs to put a parallel effort into getting CART and ALS for the hard of hearing similar to what is being done for interpreting, update the website with more information on CART providers and ALS, audiologists need to understand the T-coil feature on hearing aids to make effective use of ALS. TVs in state facilities need to have the captioning feature and a relay call center should be established in WA because out-of-state call centers have employees with foreign accents that are difficult to understand. Need to address the high cost of hearing aids with a state subsidy. Questions of when CapTel relay services would be available.

Opportunities for the deafblind to provide comments were provided. Relevant sections of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan was prepared in accessible format of large print, Braille Grade 1 and Grade 2. These accessible formats were provided to deafblind individuals in advance of the following presentations:

Washington State Deaf Blind Citizens (WSDBC) general meeting on January 14, 2006
Lighthouse for the Blind - DeafBlind 'class' on February 22, 2006
Lighthouse for the Blind - Deafblind 'class' on May 3, 2006

WSDBC January 14th – The one hour presentation was about a general overview about ODHH programs, the law, budget and 5-year strategic plan with questions and answers. Many of the WSDBC members attended the 2 ½ hour deafblind classes hosted by the Lighthouse for the Blind.

Lighthouse for the Blind – Deafblind 'classes'

February 22, 2006

Comments at the town hall meeting include: The state agencies need to work together to seek more services. There is a need for better crosswalks at street intersections, develop relay standards for deafblind users, need for more professional support service providers (SSP) as opposed to using volunteers, SSP need to be expanded statewide and ODHH should look at Texas, Minnesota and Canada to see how it is implemented. Provision of SSP and interpreters need to be centralized within one agency to meet the deafblind needs. There is a need to expand 'orientation and mobility' training to navigate around town which would result in less reliance on SSP. SSP has been identified at the meeting as the top priority for the deafblind community.

May 3, 2006

Many suggestions include diverting some funding from the Centers to the Deaf Blind Service Center to provide statewide case management services to deaf blind individuals, obtaining discounts for long distance charges as telephone conversations take longer, providing deafblind interpreting to access video relay services, having deafblind input into the sign language interpreting contract, more choices of preferred interpreters and referral agencies.

Summary

The process of involving various stakeholders is expected to undergo continuous refinement in the next several years. As evidenced, ODHH received many comments and suggestions. While it is not realistically possible to address every unmet need, ODHH has incorporated those suggestions where it fits within its' existing mandate, budget and resources.

The initial draft was compiled by the ODHH Director, which was reviewed and commented upon by the ODHH staff and DSHS Deputy Secretary, Public Affairs. The draft plan was posted in May on the website, available to download, for public comments. This final 2007-2011 strategic plan was submitted to DSHS and Office of Financial Management on July 2006. However, strategic thinking, planning and implementation will be an ongoing process over the years to come.

FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

ODHH faces a number of challenges mentioned throughout the Strategic Plan 2007-2011 document that will be addressed through strategic planning. Several viable strategies have been identified for implementation as opportunities arise. Of critical importance to ODHH statutory mandate is the preservation of telecommunication services via the relay and equipment distribution programs. The primary management challenge is to maintain ODHH program operations under its current budget structure in the face of dwindling excise tax base due to telephone subscribers' transitions from telephone landlines to wireless and internet technologies and the replacement of state funds for the regional service centers in fiscal year 2002 dictated by the 2002 Legislature.

The major challenge lies in cost-effectively administering the social and human services program while adhering to the goal of achieving functional equivalency in telecommunications programs and services pursuant to changing federal regulations that capitalize on emergent technologies which promote a greater level of functionality-equivalent usage. At the same time, pressures are mounting to address the lack/gaps of specialized services, shrinking pool of qualified available for community interpreting, to close gaps in early intervention services for children and families, and to holistically integrate a myriad of service providers into a seamless service delivery structure.

To address these challenges, legislation would be required to expand the revenue source of telephone surcharges to include wireless telephone subscribers. Legislation would also be needed to clarify ODHH program and funding authority. ODHH has an opportunity to introduce these issues for consideration.

Chapter 4 • Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

POG: Improve the economic vitality of business and individuals

A: INCREASE EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Goal 1: Remove barriers to functionally-equivalent access to telecommunications

Objective 1: Increase usage of telecommunication services and features

Strategy:

- Provide telecommunication relay services and features
- Collaborate with relay provider on outreach plan

Performance Measures: (activities: conduct TRS program)

- Volume and type of relay calls
- Status on outreach deliverables

Strategy:

- Distribute specialized telecommunication equipment

▪ **Performance Measures:** (activities: conduct TED program)

- # of approved applicants
- # of client training

Strategy:

- Provide videoconferencing sites, services and features

Performance Measures: (activities: conduct CAN program)

- # of video sites
- # and % of usage
- # of employee and client training

Objective 2: Pursue new and emerging telecommunication services and features

Strategy:

- Research, design and develop new deafblind telecommunication device

Performance Measures: (activities: provide equipment to deafblind)

- Status on R & D contract deliverables

Strategy:

- Enable provision of Captioned Telephone (CapTel) as a relay feature

Performance Measures: (activities: Provide relay service feature to hard of hearing)

- Status on progression

Strategy:

- Implement video remote interpreting (VRI) as a pilot project

Performance Measures: (activities: access to DSHS for deaf)

- Status on pilot project

Goal 2: Remove barriers to functionally-equivalent access to DSHS services

Objective 1: Provide reasonable accommodations with auxiliary aids

Strategy:

- Ensure availability of sign language interpreter services

Performance Measures: (conduct SLIM program)

- # and % of contractors and freelance interpreters
- # and % of interpreting services usage

Strategy:

- Implement availability of assistive listening systems on a regional basis

Performance Measures: (activities: conduct ACT program)

- Status on pilot project

Strategy:

- Explore feasibility of providing real-time captioning on a DSHS-wide basis

Performance Measures: (activities: conduct ACT program)

- Status on feasibility study

Objective 2: Develop DSHS employees' knowledge and competency

Strategy:

- Provide education and training to DSHS employees

Performance Measures:

- # of technical assistance and training (activities: access to DSHS)

Strategy:

- Train state employees to become Sign Communication Proficiency Interview raters
- Assess employees' sign language proficiency to determine eligibility for assignment pay for dual language skills

Performance Measures: (activities: access to DSHS)

- Sign Communication Proficiency Interview rater training to state employees
- # and % of assessments for employees' proficiency

Goal 3: Remove barriers to functionally equivalent access to employment, government, businesses, non-profit organizations and the public.

Objective 1: Provide social and human services

Strategy:

- Provide an array of services through non-profit organizations

Performance Measures: (activities: conduct SHS program)

- # and % of clients' cases by topics
- # and % of education, training and technical assistance
- # and % of information & referral requests by topics
- # and % of outreach activities

Objective 2: Heighten public awareness and sensitivity**Strategy:**

- Respond to public requests for information and referrals

Performance Measures: (activities: conduct IRA program)

- # and % of information & referral requests by topics

Strategy:

- Conduct outreach activities

Performance Measures: (activities: conduct IRA program)

- # and % of publications
- # and % of outreach activities

POG: Improve the ability of state government to achieve results efficiently and effectively

B: REINFORCE STRONG MANAGEMENT TO INCREASE PUBLIC TRUST**Goal 1: Strengthen and improve service delivery****Objective 1: Strengthen service delivery****Strategies:**

- Pursue legislative bill(s) related to program and funding authority
- Revise Administrative Policy 7.20

Performance Measures:

- Status on progress

Objective 2: Redesign and/or streamline existing service delivery**Strategies:**

- Promulgate TED administrative regulations
- Revise SHS Statement of Work, develop performance based outcomes & measures, transition to alternative payment method
- Review alternative models of SHS delivery systems
- Draft ODHH programs' policy & procedures

Performance Measures:

- Status on progress

Objective 3: Improve customer satisfaction through feedback

Strategies:

- Assess client satisfaction levels with ODHH services
- Resolve client grievances and/or disputes

Performance Measures:

- # and % of client satisfaction surveys
- # and % of grievances, disputes and resolutions

POG: Improve the ability of state government to achieve results efficiently and effectively

C: STRENGTHEN DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Goal 1: Improve Information Technology systems

Objective 1: Strengthen data collection and sharing performance indicators

Strategies:

- Create and implement Excel spreadsheets
- Design and implement new database
- Create dynamic internet and intranet websites

Performance Measures:

- Status on progress

Goal 2: Develop a demographic profile

Objective 1:

Strategies:

- Gather statistics of clients served by ODHH
- Gather statistics collected by various agencies and programs

Performance Measures:

- Compile a demographic report

POG: Improve the ability of state government to achieve results efficiently and effectively

D: VALUE AND DEVELOP EMPLOYEES

Goal 1: Improve workforce development and diversity

Objective 1: Improve completion rate of mandatory trainings, including Diversity training

Strategies:

- Identify and track mandatory trainings

Performance Measures:

- # and % of mandatory trainings completed

Objective 2: Advance professional and leadership development

Strategies:

- Utilize conference opportunities to learn best practices
- Utilize training opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge

Performance Measures: (activities: xxxx, xxxx)

- # of staff attending conferences
- # of staff completing training in:
 - Contract management
 - performance-based outcomes
 - software applications
 - program management

POG: Improve the ability of state government to achieve results efficiently and effectively

E: IMPROVE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Goal 1: Identify Gaps and Remove Barriers in Delivery Systems

Objective 1: Improve disproportionality rates in at least one client service

Strategies:

- Expand Centers' case management to provide hard of hearing and deafblind with equitable services

Performance Measures:

- Increase in percent of hard of hearing and deafblind engaged in case management

Objective 2: Improve service delivery by working with partners

Strategies:

- Collaborate with DSHS LEP coordinators on interpreter services contract and establish community focus group
- Collaborate with Mental Health Transformation and establish community focus group
- Collaborate with DVR and DSB to reestablish defunct deafblind task force and include community service providers
- Collaborate with DSHS and Office of Emergency Management on disaster preparedness and notification plan

Performance Measures:

- Status on progress

Chapter 5 • Performance Assessment

GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

ODHH with its' small number of employees has seen FY06 as the year of transition from the DSHS "program and fiscal review" reports to the GMAP reports. ODHH management is members of the DSHS Performance Analyst Consultant group discussing GMAP initiatives. Employees has taken GMAP training, observed GMAP meetings, and reviewed GMAP literature. The program managers prepared logic models, linking resources to results, and constructed performance based outcomes and measures. Ongoing refinements to the performance based outcomes and measures are to be expected. The Deputy Secretary will be reviewing the GMAP reports & presentations and provide ongoing feedback. ODHH will begin to present GMAP reports to DSHS management during FY07.

OTHER PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Internal Audits – Operation Review & Consultation has conducted several internal audits of client service contracts with the Regional Service Centers in the recent past few years. Service delivery performance was deemed satisfactory. The audit report advised ODHH on how to address issues regarding contractual language, compensation, advance payment and overpayment.

Independent Reviews – The State Auditor Office (SAO) conducted an audit of the client service contract with one of the Regional Service Centers. It was concluded under the broad definition of "administrative costs", such costs being reimbursed was significantly high. While no audit findings had been issued, ODHH took proactive steps. Contract amendments were executed with all of the Centers clarifying the definitions between direct and indirect costs and requiring new reports to enable tracking of such costs. It has also prompted ODHH to review the various compensation payment methods available. The cost-reimbursement payment method currently being used is an inefficient approach that creates disadvantages and avoidable administrative burdens. ODHH is planning the eventual transition to one of several alternative payment methods: lump sum, fee for service and/or performance-based.

The SAO also conducted a DSHS-wide Information Technology audit. ODHH had an entrance and exit interview with the auditors to discuss a few findings: server needed to be relocated in a secure room and an IT Disaster recovery plan had to be drafted. The disaster recovery plan was drafted and submitted. The server was moved to an ISSD secure room.

Client Satisfaction Surveys - ODHH drafted and implemented two new client satisfaction surveys. One survey was to assess client satisfaction with the contracted trainers of the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution program. Satisfaction with the trainers' installation of specialized telecommunication equipment and training on how to use the equipment was very high. The other survey was to assess client satisfaction with the Centers' provision of case management services. The Centers were expected to give the survey to each client upon completion of services to be mailed to ODHH. For reasons not clear, none of the results are forthcoming and ODHH will be exploring other alternative approaches to assess the level of client satisfaction.

CLOSING PERFORMANCE GAPS

Emerging state initiatives such as Priorities of Government (POG), Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) and State Auditor Office performance-based audit authority have heightened the need to implement performance-based outcomes and measures. Most of the objectives and strategies have been incorporated to close some of these performance gaps. The gaps are as follows:

Telecommunication Relay Service – Washington remains a national leader in the pursuit of functionally equivalent telecommunication opportunities. The cutting edge implementation of video-based network technologies in conjunction with services is one example of what ODHH is currently doing in ensuring functional equivalency. However, the lack of specialized telecommunication equipment for deafblind to make telephone or relay calls continues to be a barrier to functional equivalency. The provision of CapTel relay service need to be addressed. CapTel is a 'functionally equivalent' relay feature benefiting the hard of hearing.

Telecommunication Equipment Distribution – ODHH has identified a few administrative inefficiencies with the existing delivery system. A review of purchasing, distribution and training practices is being reviewed. New administrative rules will be promulgated. Such efforts to streamline processes will shorten the turn-around time from initial receipt date of applications to clients receiving the equipment, possibly eliminate the need for on-site equipment storage, minimize the burden of processing clients' personal checks based on an income sliding scale and equipment exchanges, and make efficient use of contracted trainers.

Social and Human Services - Regional Service Centers provide to the local communities, including case management, education & training, information & referral, outreach and assistive technology loan & referral. As a priority, ODHH has selected to review Centers' case management practices. In the past, ODHH was tracking the Center's case manager workload indicators: number of client 'contacts' e.g. phone calls, fax, emails, etc. Services being provided to clients continue to be reported in monthly aggregated totals. ODHH is now focusing on the number of clients served. There was no reporting of actual persons receiving actual services nor could ODHH identify the trends in caseloads. As a result, in FY06, ODHH initiated a new reporting requirement to identify these clients. In FY07 and beyond, ODHH and the Regional Service Centers will be collaborating to construct performance based outcomes and measurements. It is the goal to develop a case management practice model, document outcomes and measures and improve tracking of caseload trends. In the future, the scope of services will place heavier emphasis on direct client services.

Historically, ODHH had to deal with the Centers' heavy reliance on ODHH funds and Center crises. Due to DSHS concerns and community feedback, ODHH will be reviewing the entire delivery system of social and human services via the Centers and explore alternative service delivery systems that would achieve greater fiscal economies of scale and more underserved and underrepresented clients being served. Such alternative service delivery systems may include the following scenarios:

1. 1 provider in Eastern WA and 1 provider in Western WA
2. 1 provider statewide
3. Contract with individual case managers
4. state-owned centers w/ DSHS employees
5. DSHS employees only – case managers

Outreach and Training – An acknowledged weakness is visibility, both within DSHS and outside of DSHS to the state and general public. ODHH does not have adequate name-recognition as a state agency. More outreach activities and developing a comprehensive mailing list are some current initiatives to heighten visibility with ongoing quality improvements in booth display, newsletters, brochures and forms to demonstrate professionalism.

Chapter 6 • Internal Capacity Assessment

WORKFORCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

ODHH will be evaluating its' human resources capacity to fulfill the agency mission. The "Workforce Development Plan" is being drafted at this time. The Workforce Development Plan will document and summarize the following factors:

- Recruitment & retention issues e.g. salaries, small pool of professionals with specialized skills in a niche market, and turnover.
- Organizational development activities, e.g. revised duties, performance evaluations, training
- 4-year organization restructuring effort (FY03-FY06) that includes changes with existing positions and organizational chart
- Workforce growth plans that include prospective new positions

TECHNOLOGY CAPACITY

ODHH lacks a comprehensive management and data information system to meet program management, data and accountability requirements. The "Information Technology Strategic Plan" will address this and is being drafted at this time. The Information Technology Strategic Plan will document and summarize the following factors:

- IT functions: network, technical support, database and website
- IT administration: staff, policies and portfolio management
- IT hardware and software: capacity development
- IT applications: inclusive of goals for database & website development
- Videoconferencing technologies and features

FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Overall, the number of landlines of which the revenue is based has been declining. At the same time, TRS expenditures have been declining due to the migration from traditional relay services to video relay services. This results in under-expenditures. Due to the under-expenditures, despite decreasing landlines and excise taxes, ODHH is experiencing a short period of excess reserves in the fund.

▪ Revenue

The "Telecommunications Devices for the Hearing and Speech Impaired Account" or "Fund 540": The telephone excise tax is based on "switched access lines" (telephone landlines). The excise tax, a surcharge, is currently to be levied in FY07 at .09 cents per line per month. ODHH could recommend excise tax increases up to a cap at .19 cents per line per month. ODHH has recommended decreasing the excise tax the last few years to control the growth in the fund balance. Each .01 cent excise tax reduction represents approximately \$400k -500k in revenue reduction depending on the number of landlines at the time of the decrease. Recent historical data indicate a 2-3% average annual decrease in the total number of landlines. The historical decline in landlines reflects the national trend of landline subscribers switching to wireless cellular telephones. The declining number of landlines presents a shrinking excise tax base. At

this time, ODHH does not have the statutory authority to collect surcharges on wireless lines.

The revenue difference between the two tables is timing only in reporting. The following table is based on actual lines and revenue collected:

Collection	Fiscal Year	# of Lines	% ↑	Excise Tax	\$ Revenue
DSHS	FY01	43,675,000	-	.15 ¢	\$6,551,250
DSHS	FY02	42,550,550	2.6%↓	.14 ¢	\$5,957,077
DSHS	FY03	41,065,993	3.5%↓	.14 ¢	\$5,749,239
DSHS	FY04	42,785,303	4.2%↑	.14 ¢	\$5,989,942
DOR*	FY05	42,195,705	1.4%↓	.13 ¢	\$5,485,442

* DOR = Department of Revenue

The following table is based on actual and accrual revenue collected for Program 850:

Program 850: Telecommunication Access Service

		Budget		Actual	
Fiscal Year	Revenue	Expenditures	Revenue	Expenditures	
FY01	6,386,844	6,796,816	6,551,094	6,117,286	
FY02*	6,139,884	7,160,916	5,950,641	5,770,754	
FY03	5,955,696	6,657,804	5,750,187	5,326,619	
FY04	5,777,544	7,565,964	5,989,942	4,100,631	
FY05	5,598,048	5,678,740	6,052,978	3,483,063	
FY06	4,215,312	5,837,848	2,999,189**	2,711,911**	

* General Funds-State was replaced with surcharge revenue (see next table)

** As of March 2006

General Funds-State is a biennium appropriation to fund the regional service centers through Program 100. The following table is based on the annual amount for the fiscal year which was eventually replaced with surcharge revenue from Program 850 in 2002.

Program 100: ODHH	
Fiscal Year	"Appropriation"
FY01	
FY02	\$883,500
FY03*	\$883,500
FY04	\$891,000
FY05	\$891,000
FY06	\$895,000
FY07	\$896,000
* General Funds-State was replaced with surcharge revenue	

▪ Fund Balance

Telecommunication Access Service (Fund 540 / Program 850): This revolving fund is based on an annual budget and any excess revenue over expenditures is carried over to the next fiscal year. The historical end-of-the year fund balances for the preceding fiscal years are displayed as follows:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Fund 540</u> <u>Balance</u>
FY01	\$4,521,432
FY02	\$3,793,829
FY03	\$3,507,999
FY04	\$4,463,857
FY05	\$6,236,762
FY06	\$6,130,775*

*As of March 2006

▪ Cost Pressures

The excess reserves in the fund balance will be depleted when the Federal Communication Commission decides to shift the cost burden to the states, subsidization of video relay service and internet protocol relay service. Community pressures to provide CapTel relay service and CapTel telephone equipment presents another challenge that would accelerate the depletion of excess reserves in the fund. Budget projections indicate that with CapTel growth, eventually, the fund would go broke.

ODHH would have to begin surcharge tax increases up to the surcharge cap of .19 cents. With the current trend of declining revenues, conservative budget projections indicate a depletion of the fund balance despite the surcharge tax increases. For the interim, the reserves are needed for future FCC mandates on the subsidization and/or provision of VRS, IP-Relay and/or CapTel.

COST REDUCTION STRATEGIES

ODHH currently distributes specialized telecommunication equipment free of charge to individuals under the 200% poverty level and those above the poverty level pay on a sliding scale. This creates an administrative burden; conducting billable calculations, depositing checks, making refunds for equipment that was returned, etc. However, the regulations will be under a review and a study conducted to determine a more equitable approach to distributing equipment to all eligible applicants: a study to include looking at instituting a chargeback, based on a sliding scale, for the equivalent cost of a regular phone purchased at a local retailer.

ODHH continues to conduct a comprehensive analysis of other states' equipment distribution delivery systems to determine which initiatives would produce the greatest cost-saving measures. For example, an initiative to implement a system allowing consumers to apply a voucher directly to a retailer could save considerable shipping costs. Additionally, cost-benefit studies of the current equipment training program as provided by contractors to consumers will be conducted.

The regional service centers provide general information and referral services to the general public. However, the content quality and extent of these resources vary from

center-to-center. The shared information and referral roles between the regional service centers and ODHH may be reengineered. The roles would be clarified for ODHH to conduct an economy-of-scale approach with national and statewide information. Benefits will include an enhanced standard in the content quality and quantity of national, US regions and state-wide information resources. The centers are best equipped with a customized approach of regional and local information given their proximity. It would free up existing contract dollars to more direct client services. The regional service centers will utilize ODHH resources and continue to provide information and referral to local resources in their respective service delivery areas.

ODHH will also be exploring payment method alternatives, weighing between a fee for services payment structure or a performance-based outcome payment method. This will place greater emphasis on accountability and direct client services.

SERVICE DELIVERY CAPACITY

Regional Service Centers

Three regional service centers' facilities are under scope of Referendum 37 mandate back in 1980s which provided a rent-free infrastructure of facilities serving people with disabilities for twenty years. The referendum was implemented through local level agreements between local nonprofits and local agencies. Various agreements are expiring. Two years ago, the concern was that these centers would begin to pay market-rate rent/lease of the existing facilities which is not affordable and funding demands would be made. Today, it is not the case. One of the Centers received a 20 year lease extension from the City of Spokane. In Seattle, the Center underwent a corporate dissolution despite a March 2005 extension to July 2005 and services were taken over by the new provider that provided its own facility. In Tacoma, the other Center to be affected in April 2009 received an extension. This has relieved the cost pressure.

The composition of Board of Directors usually has been with grassroots activists who have no training or experience in how to oversee a nonprofit organization. For grassroots activists to be truly empowered, the role of the Directors is to provide education, mentorship and training opportunities. Centers have experienced instances of crises at one point or another which has not been handled well by the Board and often necessitated ODHH intervention to ensure contractual compliance and continuation of uninterrupted service delivery. Board capacity has been identified as a high risk. As a result, strategic plans and fund development plans, bylaws are new reporting requirements so ODHH may conduct risk assessments, looking for trends in board relations, decision-making, fiscal policy and administrative oversight, prior to executing future contract.



This document is also available electronically at:

www1.dshs.wa.gov/strategic

Persons with disabilities may request a hard copy by contacting DSHS at: 360.902.7800, or TTY: 800.422.7930.

Questions about the strategic planning process may be directed to DSHS Constituent Services at: 1.800.737.0617.

Washington State
Department of Social and Health Services
P.O. Box 45010
Olympia, WA 98504-5010
www.wa.gov/dshs

